

Factually Elite: Trivial Pursuit, Education, and the 1980s By Elizabeth Sudmeier

No matter the source and variety of facts, more and more Americans just can't say no. Having succumbed to the constant flow of information in society, they stand ever ready to acquire a new statistic or anecdote to drop over cocktails or, better still, simply to savor in solitude. Constantly reading, watching, and listening, they are the informational age's consummate consumers; their habit is information for its own sake.¹

In 1981, President Ronald Reagan called for a new beginning with a unified idea of the nation. His inaugural address spoke of the diversity of the 1960s and 1970s, and asked for its end: “We hear much of special interest groups. Well, our concern must be for a special interest group that has been too long neglected. It knows no sectional boundaries or ethnic and racial divisions, and it crosses party lines. . . . They are, in short, ‘we the people,’ this breed called Americans.”² This vision hoped to unite Americans in a new cause—putting their trust in the government instead of fighting it, thinking as one unit rather than many. Reagan rallied most of his support from a neo-conservative front. The New Right offered one vision of unity—with all Americans seeking a moral truth, in opposition to leftist diversity. Popular culture of the 1980s showed Americans as consumers—a piece of Reagan’s supply-side vision to tighten the weak economy and provide jobs for all Americans. One product that reached mass popularity was the board game Trivial Pursuit®. Although the 1980s had many fads, Trivial Pursuit offered a product that paid attention to recent aspects of US history and culture, presented the importance of western culture, and preceded changes in the US education system that did the same. This game only slightly affected Americans’ pocket books, but played a larger role in defining their understanding of academic and social success. Although ‘only a game,’ America took Trivial Pursuit seriously. The game reflected and helped promote current conceptions of self worth, assisting an educational move for more fact-based education, which would unite a country divided by two generations of cultural and social segmentation. In and of itself, the information it dispelled was trivial, but the idea it promoted and

the trends it inspired are a clear demonstration of American evaluations of intelligence in the 1980s and a goal of solidifying America, as well as the nation's culture wars between the New Right and the left.

1980s Gaming Theory

The historiography surrounding board games is limited and generally discusses the basics of the games and industry, but not the deeper social implications. Philip E. Orbanes's book The Game Makers describes the history of Parker Brothers' games—the company's beginnings, product creations, and business strategies. Orbanes approaches board games as an industry promoting entertainment for all and providing a lucrative business for its members. He claims: "When we were kids, playing one for the first time often marked a rite of passage; as adults, they continue to renew bonds within families and strengthen the warmth and friendship."³ Although describing Parker Brothers' chronological progression, he does not discuss the impact board games have on society, or the greater significance of their role in American history. Board games are simply a means of entertainment and a moneymaker.⁴

Yet board games are social and some historians have argued that they have a greater cultural intent. In 1977, David Wallace Adams and Victor Edmonds wrote "Making your Move: The Educational Significance of the American Board Game, 1832-1904." Adams and Edmonds argue that board games have served as a way to educate children about American values and concepts of success. They analyze board games as "an informal mode of education and socialization, with particular emphasis placed on its role as a transmitter of an old American idea—the idea of success."⁵ In the mid-nineteenth century, board games valued religion and high morals. For example Mansion of Happiness® hinged success in the game on the ability to fall into as few of the 'vice' traps as possible. By the end of the nineteenth century, games, especially those by Parker

Brothers, focused on success in financial enterprise.⁶ Adams and Edmonds are best at highlighting the social implications of board games, but do not draw larger connections about the societal impact of these games.

This historiography generally assumes that adults make board games for children—and only children. However, Trivial Pursuit started as a game for adults. If board games are used to teach virtues, what virtues does a trivia game instill? If the game is for adults, should not they already hold these virtues? The focus on an adult audience indicates that adults need to learn something. Trivial Pursuit was part of an attempt to educate all Americans about the virtue of solid facts based on Western values while hailing the self and uniting the truly “American” facts.

The New Right formed a significant aspect of cultural history, seeking to teach virtues. Historians characterize the 1980s as a time of individual concern for personal prosperity, when the New Right encouraged a returned trust to moral authority. This authority suppressed counter subversive elements, asked Americans to rejoin in one effort to better themselves via their purchasing power, and sought to decrease conflict. This trend followed an opposite reaction in the 1960s and 1970s, when society segmented, beginning a recognition of America’s diversity and the rights of various groups. At that time, consumer advocacy and social equality were universal concerns.⁷ Rather than quietly appeal to the government for better regulation, people took to the streets and protested injustice. There was suspicion and distrust of authority. This changed in the 1980s, when a neo-conservative movement trusted their president and rejected what they considered immoral laws.

Tom Engelhardt’s The End of Victory Culture details a growing American negativity between 1945 and 1975. Engelhardt argues that after 1975, Americans regained faith in the nation. They no longer questioned the virtue of the white male and war, because, as Michael Rogin stresses,

Reagan asked Americans to abandon subversive questioning.⁸ Likewise, Gil Troy, in Morning in America, describes the advent of the Reagan era as a new start and a new hope.⁹ Thus, diversification became less wanted, and unity more important.

Reagan entered office in 1981 as a controller and advocator of one America, supported by the New Right. He had a clear vision, which he dictated to the people. He exuded confidence in 1981 when presenting his Program for Economic Recovery. Although this program did not succeed, the confidence he had, and his initiative to act without asking Americans to sacrifice appealed to a nation tired of protest and of presidents who had not succeeded in improving the economic situation. Reagan did not ask Americans to follow his guidelines, but dictated as a fatherly hero. Michael Rogin argues that Reagan's political career parallels his Hollywood movies.¹⁰ Reagan saw himself as a hero, presented himself as this to the public, and as a hero wanted to unite America under his vision.

The 1980 election reflected the culmination of what William Berman called America's Right Turn. "Middle class voters no longer favored greater governmental regulations of the economy at a time of perceived economic crisis and uncertainty. Hence, they turned their back on a public interest agenda."¹¹ According to Berman, "The dominant cultural fact emerging from Reagan's first term was that unabashed quest for money and the sanctioning of individual greed that had become more respectable than any time since the boomdays of the 1920s."¹² However, America had not only become economically conservative as a result of 1960s and 1970s experiences. There was also a distinct turn from liberalism to a New Religious Right, which objected to abortion, pornography, and gay rights, and sought to install prayer in public schools. In 1980, there were 30-65 million fundamentalists in the United States. Though not all Christians supported the moral

majority, its leaders—such as Jerry Falwell—did have a strong voice in Congress and the media.¹³

According to James Davison Hunter, the 1980s began a new culture war, which sought to determine who in society had the moral authority. Two fronts fought for control of the country's moral compass. Hunter argues that the culture war was between institutional powers, not the masses.

While ordinary people participate in the construction of their private worlds, the development and articulation of the more elaborate systems of meaning, including the realm of public culture, falls almost always to the realm of elites. They are the ones who create the concepts, supply the language, and explicate the logic of public discussion. They are the ones who define and redefine the meaning of public symbols.¹⁴

Hunter characterizes the elite as those who hold power in society, through public office or institutional participation. Both sides of the culture wars called the other extremists. For example, in a speech by Yale University's President to 1981's freshmen, he called the Religious Right "peddlers of coercion."¹⁵ Members of the Christian Voice called the ACLU anti-American.¹⁶ Although Ronald Reagan did not have strong religious beliefs, he did support the New Right's call for renewed nationalism. Only one member of Reagan's cabinet espoused the ideals of the New Right, but Reagan appointed several Supreme Court judges that appealed to the New Right's cause, including associate justice Antonin Scalia; he also promoted William Rehnquist to chief justice.¹⁷ This conservatism penetrated aspects of American culture and the larger policy debates. Although not all Americans agreed with neo-conservatism, Congress and government institutions developed a debate that was visible to the public. The New Right's major cause was to instill morality in government and nation. The increasingly vocal neo-conservatives sought a religiously- and western-oriented culture. Their vision of equal rights did not mean separate recognition, but incorporation into a less morally diverse public policy.

Historians cite Jerry Falwell as an essential member of the New Right; however, William

Bennett, the Secretary of Education also played an important role in pushing America toward a western canon of knowledge in opposition to liberals. Hunter's analysis of the culture wars, written in 1991 when they were still in progress, highlights the psychology behind the war—a quest for hegemony in defining what was morally correct and the best path for the nation. Liberals continued to advocate diversity, as well as abortion laws, gay rights, and freedom of speech. He cites a change from an industrial- to information-based economy as one reason why Americans were enveloped in the culture war.¹⁸ Americans wanted to “institutionalize a particular vision of national identity and purpose.”¹⁹ This institutionalization would require the creation of a bloc that promoted one conservative vision.

The 1980s culture wars epitomized the hegemonic struggles that Gramsci discussed. The New Right sought control, whereas the left resisted changes to the current status quo. Each appealed to the public for support. According to T.J. Jackson Lears, “to achieve cultural hegemony, the leaders of a historical bloc must develop a world view that appeals to a wide range of other groups within the society, and they must be able to claim with at least some plausibility that their particular interests are those of society at large.”²⁰ Because all Americans were interested in educating the youth, they were drawn into the curriculum debates of the 1980s and may have developed their own opinions. Within the blocs competing for power were the politicians, national administrators, educational critics, classroom teachers, students, and parents. In order to appeal to a wider range of these people, each bloc had to promote an idea that would appeal to both the leaders and the masses. Teachers fell into both categories, because they followed legislation, and led their classrooms.

Because Reaganomics widened the economic gap, a cultural element was needed to prevent the mass resurgence of 1960s and 1970s protests. The conservative bloc of educators embraced the Trivial Pursuit form of entertainment as a pedagogic tool and used its popularity to promote new

curriculum standards that would unite Americans and promote excellence. The game highlighted this ‘one’ culture via its focus on a certain set of facts. The American education system also offered a hegemonic system, which followed Trivial Pursuit in advocating a canon of knowledge evaluated via fact-based assessment.²¹ Trivial Pursuit stands separate from other board games. It was fun, but at the same time the game taught Americans a certain set of knowledge and they rarely objected. In fact, they embraced this education, which promised improvement. Although not specifically discussed, Trivial Pursuit’s concept became a tool in the culture wars’ hegemonic struggles.

Methodology

In order best to evaluate the way Trivial Pursuit and education interacted with the culture wars, this paper uses three main sources. The first is the original game from 1981: its packaging, contents, instructions, and question content. Graphs in the appendix show the trends of questions asked in 300 of the 1000 question cards. Figures 1-6 show chronological trends across categories. Figures 7-14 show geographical trends in three categories: Geography, History, and Arts and Literature.²² Figures 15-19 show the frequently mentioned figures from history, art, entertainment, and sports in all categories. There are many more, but with less frequency in the sample. Figure 20 shows specific historic events mentioned. Figures 21-26 show the number of references to sports, leisure activities, television shows, movies, books, and magazines.²³ Other sources include newspaper articles relating to Trivial Pursuit, and articles, curriculum guidelines, and lesson plans highlighting trends in educational principles and Trivial Pursuit’s incorporation into classrooms. Pedagogic articles also demonstrate the struggle between Left and Right in the culture wars.

This paper uses the term ‘elite’ prevalently. By this is meant the state or feeling of superiority over another, due to education, political power, and most importantly—cultural wealth. Americans sought to be seen as belonging to an elite, and products were a way to demonstrate their

worth. The elite control society and culture; they work by being fancier than the other.

Playing the Mass Market

According to economic reports, Trivial Pursuit was too expensive, too elitist, had too little advertising, and was for the wrong audience. Nonetheless, it sold a record number of copies in its first year on the American market. Why was Trivial Pursuit such a success? Changing attitudes of American consumers in the 1980s can explain the initial enthusiasm over an overpriced game.

Lizabeth Cohen describes the 1980s as a shift from the citizen consumer trends of the century.

Whereas from the 1930s to as late as the 1970s, to refer to the consumer interest was also to appeal to some larger public good beyond the individual's self-interest, the ubiquitous invocation of the consumer today—as patient, as parent, as social security recipient—often means satisfying the private interest of the paying customer . . . whose greatest concern is, 'Am I getting my money's worth?'²⁴

Instead of focusing on how America could improve based on purchases, Americans focused on how they themselves could improve.

Gil Troy attributes this trend to Reagan's concept of progress through prosperity, a supply-side theory, which "cut taxes and managed the money supply."²⁵ Reagan's Federal Reserve chair, Paul Volcker, increased interest rates, which tightened the money supply and made it worth more.²⁶ The purchasing trends are important for understanding the success of Trivial Pursuit, especially since these trends were national. Advertisers marketed to consumers who sought the newest, most advanced technology in order to compete with their neighbors and to show that they were elite.

The Reagans were one example of the elite standard of the 1980s. The 1981 inauguration ushered in a change in style. Whereas Jimmy Carter walked from the Capitol to the White House in 1977, Reagan rode in a limousine. Throughout his presidency, Jimmy Carter and his wife were photographed in jeans, sweaters, and jogging clothes; Ronald and Nancy Reagan dressed up.²⁷ The change from casual to glitzy also applied to products. American consumers asked their purchases to

offer them unique products and to treat them as if they were special. Trivial Pursuit answered this call. Although high-priced, it offered players a scale on which to rank their personal worth, by providing friendly competition in a test of fact recognition. If you could succeed in the game, you demonstrated your elite worth. Likewise, because you owned the game, you could repeatedly test your value and rank yourself against friends and family.

By 1983, the Reagan's supply-side economic theories were in full swing. Although the national deficit increased, Americans also found more jobs. In 1984, unemployment dropped from 9.5% to 7.4%—this was the same level as in 1981, however inflation dropped from 10.3% in 1981 to 4.3% in 1984, giving the money Americans earned in their jobs more worth.²⁸ Americans began to feel the effects of Reaganomics and now had more expendable income. This change came as a result of an economic plan proposed in 1981 by David Stockman, and introduced by Reagan to Congress and the American people in February of that year. This plan reasoned that “high taxes and cumbersome regulations strangled the economy.”²⁹ Although Reagan's vision of a \$500 million budget surplus by 1984 was a false dream, Americans did spend more.³⁰ Despite the budget deficit, there were four million new jobs in 1983, benefiting those belonging to the upper and middle classes.³¹ Lower taxes assisted the upper classes, who then bought more and espoused Reagan's ideal of prosperity. The baby-boomer generation had come of age and spent their money on the ‘big’ items. This heightened sense of competition pushed purchasing, and facilitated unification, by encouraging Americans to purchase the same products. Trivial Pursuit was one of the products that these new consumers rallied around—introducing them to a product that espoused elite ideals of power through knowledge and a way to unite with others. Americans could receive similar ideas by watching the same television programs or movies, but Trivial Pursuit required active participation, it became a stronger connecting force. Playing actively with each other, Americans could have

discussions and learned what everyone else knew. Because it was played across the United States, the information learned in one Trivial Pursuit game in New York could be learned in California as well.

Producing a Cultural Phenomenon

Trivial Pursuit's creators, Scott Abbott, Chris Haney, and John Haney, were three irreverent thirty-something Canadians. They created the game out of boredom and a desire to make money.³² As in the United States, Canada faced inflation and these men sought a means to stimulate their personal worth. They did not intend to improve the public, but to exploit it. They did not create questions that would benefit society, but that would frustrate people. Chris Haney and Scott Abbott envisioned Trivial Pursuit on a Saturday night in 1979, after they could not find their Scrabble® board and proposed inventing a game. That evening they envisioned the design of the game board, the rules, and began proposing questions. They then enlisted the help of Haney's brother John and the legal advice of Ed Werner. With this assistance, the team created their own company in 1980. The company's name is only one example of the attitude under which Trivial Pursuit was created. They called it "Horn Abbot Ltd., marrying Chris' nickname, said to be either Horn or Horny, with Abbott minus the final t. The t was dropped to allow them to create their logo: an abbot with a horn—a horny abbot."³³ In 1980, they traveled to southern Spain to write the questions, produced the prototypes, and then traveled to toy fairs, trying to sell their products. Parker Brothers rejected them, and finally they got the support of Selchow & Righter, the small company that made Scrabble and Parcheesi®. After its initial success in Canada, the game arrived on the American market in 1983. However, Selchow & Righter adjusted some of the content, so that it would better apply to a neo-conservative American ideology that hoped to unify Americans under a certain moral and western standard.

After deciding to produce the game, Selchow & Righter and Horn Abbot focused on what image to give the public. Horn Abbot developed the product design. Until this point, board games generally came in long, flat boxes, like Monopoly®'s or Candy Land®'s. Trivial Pursuit had an individual shape and design. The five-pound box was square, dark blue, with its title written in maize calligraphy. Under the title was a subtitle: "Master Game~Genus Edition." The four side panels also had the game's title in the same calligraphy, complimented by the age of the intended audience—Adult—and the number of players—2 to 24. Likewise, there was a quote from Alexander Pope, "What mighty contests rise from trivial things." Only when lifting the heavy box and turning it over did consumers learn what the game actually was. This individual design worked to attract an elite consumership. Because people who saw the game in stores thought it looked like a Brooks Brothers' box, it represented expense.³⁴ According to Louise Bernike: "The rationale behind it was to make the game upscale from the start and sell it in stores that didn't usually carry games."³⁵ Therefore, it appeared in Barnes & Noble and Macy's, as well as in FAO Schwarz and Toys 'R' Us.

The game's subtitle also offered several elite visions. First, 'Master Game' referred to its being the original with game board and pieces, as opposed to the forthcoming versions, such as Baby Boomer, Young Players and All-Star Sports editions, proposed by Selchow & Righter prior to production of the Master Game. By using the word 'master' an image of superiority could take hold. Likewise, the title "Genus" caused confusion along with a sense of prestige. In a novel centered on yuppie New Yorkers and their Trivial Pursuit obsession, a fourteen-year-old girl admonished her father, saying, "You and all your brilliant friends played the *Genius* Edition of your stupid game for a year before you realized it's called the *Genus* Edition."³⁶ For even a brief moment, players could believe that this game was designed for geniuses, and therefore, if they

succeeded, they could belong to this category.³⁷ Haney and Abbott did not indicate whether this confusion was intentional; however, many newspaper articles in 1983 and 1984 commented on the mix-up and player reactions indicate a need for intellectual prowess to succeed. Having found success, Americans could delude themselves about their categorization as genius.

The player description did reflect Horn Abbot's intention. They wished to gear the game toward an adult audience that would understand their jokes and appreciate the trivia provided. The lead advertising executive for Selchow & Righter insisted that the game be marketed toward 'high teens to sixty' rather than just baby boomers.³⁸ This was a compromise, though it did not alter the game's content. Likewise, the number of players—2 to 24, reflected the parlor game nostalgia that Haney and Abbott set out to invoke. They envisioned a group of friends sitting around the living room for an evening of fun and impertinence. Although this intent was met—newspapers described families, groups of friends, and yuppies playing the game—consumers and producers did change the inventor's purpose by making trivia a standard by which Americans should live. Selchow & Righter understood the market and recognized that Reagan-era standards did not section Americans into categories. Reagan generally considered that all Americans could fall into one category—potential spender; neo-conservatives wanted all Americans to follow their standards.³⁹

Opening the box, the player first saw a black board with the logo engraved in gold. The opened bi-fold board revealed a wagon wheel design with six spokes, the squares contained drawings of horsemen, soccer players, hot air balloons, pocket watches, etc. These did not reflect the game's content, but did have an elitist, cultured quality. They were not filled with the garish lights, robots, and cartoons of 1980s video games and gimmicks.⁴⁰ By invoking images from a black-and-white era, the game showed age, which also indicated superiority over contemporary products and nostalgia for a simpler time. The player entered 'class' without attending an inaugural

ball. Although questions were not based on what the intelligentsia would call essential—or classical—knowledge, players received this impression from the superiority of the product material and the old-fashioned images.

Having produced the game's design, Horn Abbot turned marketing over to Selchow & Righter. Trivial Pursuit's marketing campaign appealed to American elitism—a desire to acquire status symbols that proved you had cultural wealth—and the goal of reaching as many Americans as possible, while saving money. It succeeded in creating mass demand, first from toy distributors and then from the consuming public without using the traditional means of advertisement.

Because of the high cost of production, Selchow & Righter did not wish to invest a lot of capital in advertisements—to do so would mean high cost for the company and would inflate the game's price, thus making it entirely inaccessible to the average American.⁴¹ Instead, advertising executive Linda Pezzano avoided expensive television or magazine advertisements by employing a word-of-mouth campaign. She sent teasers to toy fair buyers, gave sample games to film stars on whom some questions were based, and distributed games to radio stations as prizes. Although Selchow & Righter representative John Nason projected advertising in several magazines—from Newsweek and Time to Psychology Today and Smithsonian—such advertisements were actually rare.⁴² Instead, a close friend or elite adversary would say, “Haven't you heard of Trivial Pursuit? Everyone's playing it.” Presumably, the status-seeking American would then rush to buy the game. Although this assumption is radical, it worked. The game did sell quickly. What an elite society had to say about the game instigated faith in its appeal. Players then looked at Trivial Pursuit as a great national game, and used it to determine elite worth. The game was played across the country and asked Americans to know the same facts. After learning that the game was fun, they set fact recognition as an important aspect of American culture. The fact that Trivial pursuit called for

indicated a trend in what information was important.

The Facts of a Popular Canon

Part of the goal of the New Right was to define what values Americans should have and what they should know. Horn Abbot's values centered on humor, but the facts show an interest in what Americans already knew and what they were expected to know. Chris Haney said that the game's focus was on American culture because "I was born in 1950, and I lived on the U.S. border. I grew up on American television."⁴³ Therefore, there was a built in appeal to the American market. The Haney's and Abbott wanted to entertain their audience, and used this concept to create the questions. However, they also knew that a wide appeal meant higher profits, and therefore adjusted their questions to better suit this goal, including cooperation with Selchow & Righter's censor. In 1984, when creating Genus II, the Haney's and Abbott revealed a portion of their question creation strategy. They divided potential questions (all of which, in some way, had amused the creators) into three categories: Stoppers: "to trip up the trivia fiends;" Mongies: "for people who are brain-dead at one in the morning . . . and they'll still get them right;" and Snappers: short, punchy questions.⁴⁴ This strategy demonstrated an elitism felt by Horn Abbot, as well as a belief that some topics existed which all players should know. In creating questions that were intentionally difficult, i.e., not widely known facts, Trivial Pursuit's creators voiced their superiority over all 'trivia fiends' and encouraged more fact hunting. They also emphasized the superiority of those fiends who could beat the system. Although many questions were based on popular culture, they were not always obvious, and therefore required an 'elite' or superior understanding of the popular canon. In addition, the game faced censure from its American producers.

Horn Abbot's choice of Selchow & Righter as their American distributor is interesting, because their sense of humor and appropriate topics did not align. When Selchow & Righter took

control of production, they objected to several questions. As Chris Haney said, “It was like Ghostbusters meet Lawrence Welk.”⁴⁵ This censure reflected conservatism within irreverence. Selchow & Righter decided what was ‘inappropriate’ for American knowledge and Horn Abbot agreed, because they needed a distributor and wanted profits. Neo-conservatives would have approved of Selchow & Righter’s censure—eliminating obscenities and examples of premarital sex. Mass American culture would not involve the complete disregard of authority that the Haney and Abbott envisioned. However the company did not censor all questions related to sex. They caught Horn Abbot at the beginning of the true neo-conservative revolution that stressed a decay in American morality. The game conformed to neo-conservative counter subversive, moral ideals by eliminating supposedly inappropriate questions and invited Americans to participate in this edited version. The facts that remained reflected what Horn Abbot and Selchow & Righter thought essential to American knowledge. Although ‘Stoppers’ might in fact stump players, the questions always related to something that Americans would recognize and that would thereby appeal to players.

The original game was the most widely purchased, reaching a higher percentage of Americans than other games and requiring this large population to acquire the same fact-recognition.⁴⁶ In 1986, an estimated one in five households owned Trivial Pursuit.⁴⁷ Of these, some memorized the questions and answers to increase their capability. In playing the game and having the same questions asked, Americans recognized the same material. This meant that Americans began to think of what Haney and Abbott put in the game as the most important areas of knowledge to develop. One player at a 1984 Chicago tournament acknowledged his game strategy: “When in doubt, I’m going to say ‘Joan Crawford.’ This game has a lot of Joan Crawford questions.”⁴⁸ Although blind guessing certainly was a strategy, Americans also relied on deduction and

unadulterated fact-recognition to succeed. The narrator in Saperstein's How Old is Lolita?, comments,

I am bad at popes. I am bad at geography, world wars, popes, and rock 'n' roll hits of the fifties. But I'm good at deduction, and I conclude that such a short papal reign [June 3-21 1963] must mean an unorthodox answer. It may even be a trick question. I guess that the answer is no one, and I'm right. Not because I know popes but because I identify with the sense of humor of the Canadians who invented the game.⁴⁹

Americans began to identify both with the humor and with the facts they needed to succeed.

The questions in the game reflect an intended audience of North American baby boomers.⁵⁰ This was a generation in their twenties, thirties, and forties. They were at prime spending age and nostalgic for their pasts. Although category headings indicated that all eras could be covered—'history,' 'arts and literature,' etc, did not indicate exclusively twentieth-century facts—there were relatively few questions relating to pre-twentieth century topics. The majority of questions centered on events that took place between 1940 and 1980, the years during which baby boomers lived, with a peak of questions about the 1960s and the year 1968 most important of all. 1968 was a pivotal year for this generation of Americans, when the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy illustrated the apex of social disorder and the hope for the Democratic Party. In highlighting this year, they emphasized the past turmoil and, in so doing, praised the present for overcoming those traumas. Ira Shor suggests that, by the 1980s, the 1960s were thought of as a nostalgic part of history, indicating a key reason why the 1960s could be so prominent in the game.⁵¹ There were also a relatively high percentage of questions asked about the 1980s, especially considering that the game was written in 1981. Those two years earned 24 references, compared to the 10 years of the 1910s, which had 23 references; the entire eighteenth century only had 25 references (see Figures 1-6).

Likewise, there was a Eurocentric bias. Few questions addressed Asia, Africa, Australia, South America or the Middle East. These fell either into the geography or history categories. Historical references to Asia and Africa often related to World War II, the Korean War, or the Vietnam War. Many historical questions about South America asked about the early European explorers. Despite increased immigration from Asia, Americans did not think it necessary to learn more about those areas of the world in their entertainment (See figures 7-11). Between 1980 and 1988 almost 20 million Hispanic and 7 million Asian immigrants entered the United States. This immigration increased poverty and diversity, which many conservatives rejected.⁵² In the 1980s American educators, working with the neo-conservative bloc, began to reemphasize the importance of studying classic western culture.⁵³ The New Right wanted Americans to think about a single American culture—not the various new cultures coming into the country.

The game also demonstrated a fear to address recent politics head on. Although history questions asked about past events, they did so without addressing the issues. The most prominently mentioned historical events—with more than two references—were World War II (28), World War I (7), the Declaration of Independence (4), the Korean War (4), the Civil War (3), and the Lindbergh Kidnapping (3). World War II represented a time of American heroism, before the Cold War and before the Civil Rights Movement—the last American victory. Despite Tom Engelhardt's argument that the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki caused Americans to lose hope, the war itself still represented the myth of American superiority over a clear enemy. The politics of the war were not confusing and stuck in Americans' minds as a vision worth knowing, unlike the Vietnam War

Although many questions discussed presidents, they too avoided politics. The Kennedy family appeared frequently in questions—John (12), Jacqueline (2), Robert (3), and Joseph Jr. (2). There were many questions about other presidential families, all ignoring politics—questions did

not address policies, platforms, speeches, or elections. Not only were presidential politics ignored, but questions also focused on those from the twentieth century and not necessarily on those who stand out as national symbols. In three hundred cards, only two questions related to George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, while twelve dealt with John F. Kennedy (Figure 15).

In asking one in five households to know this information, the game offered a way to unite Americans. The knowledge they shared and appreciated would benefit the unification that neo-conservatives sought. The prevalence of these references, meant that Americans playing the game now evolved into one culture that needed to know about the Kennedys, the 1960s, baseball, and North America in order to succeed.⁵⁴ There was an obvious assumption by Horn Abbot (and Selchow & Righter) that Americans would know most of these references, and that these were topics that would most interest and amuse Americans, because they amused the creators. Within this assumption was also the dictation that if Americans did not already know the information, they needed to learn it, or else they would fail. If you did not know about curling or hockey, that was all right; but if you did not know about baseball, you risked losing the game and losing face—in 1983, after having finally achieved a stronger personal economy, Americans did not want to lose face. None of these references attempted to teach a specific virtue—they simply called for the facts. Nonetheless, the facts included and excluded show appropriate ways to glorify certain people, places and events over others. Their Eurocentrism reflected the neo-conservative push for western studies and the dismissal of separate minority rights. However, these facts meant nothing if Americans did not play.

Playing the Game

Alan Saperstein's 1987 novel begins with a 'typical' 1980s scene—eight thirty-something semi-affluent adults gathered around the Trivial Pursuit board, trying to find the answers. Although

Trivial Pursuit was a game of the so-called yuppie class, it reached a larger audience. By the end of 1983, 1.3 million people had purchased Trivial Pursuit in the United States. In 1984, 20-24 million games were sold.⁵⁵ Accounts of purchasers show Trivial Pursuit's popularity across America throughout the 1980s. From Boston to Los Angeles, Minnesota to Texas, Americans bought the same game despite its cost—\$27 to \$40.⁵⁶ Some even sought it on the black market for up to \$70.⁵⁷ Grandparents bought the game for their grandkids; coworkers played together; college students competed—men and women, young and old enjoyed the game. Although many agreed that the game was overpriced, that did not stop its popularity. Current economic policies made purchasing easier for those paying lower taxes; the ability to reuse the game made it economically dependable. At the same time, “The [budget] cuts enacted before the recession prevented a spending surge during the recession.”⁵⁸ Americans spent more, but not as much as Reagan expected. Unease from 1970s inflation still made American adults wary of spending vast amounts of money; yet, they also sought entertainment. Because board games could be played repeatedly, they eventually proved thriftier than spending every Friday night at the movies. This way, adults could stay home but not feel restricted.

Besides its economic sense, Trivial Pursuit also appealed because of the feeling of worth it gave to players. In 1984, presidential candidate Walter Mondale encouraged Americans to think of what they ‘would be’ after Reagan’s drastic economic changes. Reagan convinced them that they were good and did not need to reflect on the future: “he preferred to be the Wizard of America’s Id than lead a new American revolution. Reagan wanted Americans to feel good, not think too hard.”⁵⁹ Reagan’s success with this platform indicated the American desire to feel appreciated, not politically challenged.

From its advent on the U.S. market, Trivial Pursuit was perceived as a game for ‘smart’

people, without broaching any serious issues. Many who praised the game enjoyed it for the intellectual challenge. Various players told journalists that the game gave them a feeling of worth—or mental challenge. Joseph Saad of New York said, “The game’s popularity lies with people wanting to show others that they are smart.”⁶⁰ Many shared this opinion and its implications. People found it important to know facts so that their friends and colleagues would think that they were intellectually superior. Kevin Meany, a thirty-year old New York actor, agreed: “This game can make you feel incredibly brilliant or incredibly stupid.”⁶¹ A store clerk at the Wayside Bazaar in Boston said that Trivial Pursuit was not for the intellectually deficient or the easily embarrassed—“If you don’t have the smarts,’ she cautioned, ‘forget it. It’s not that easy.’”⁶² This equation of factual—even trivial—knowledge with intelligence indicates a change in the American value system from social advocacy to individual need—especially as the knowledge required for the game was finite. Americans judged their worth by knowing that which all others knew, as dictated at this time by Trivial Pursuit’s questions.

Some Americans did not like the game. Dave Barry argued, “The problem with Trivial Pursuit, I think, is that it slows down a party.”⁶³ Because people were sitting around, intent upon the game, they no longer got rowdy and loud. The neo-conservative point of the 1980s was to avoid the rowdy behavior and insecurity that characterized the 1960s and 1970s. In his column in October 1984, Barry proposed creating a Sabotage Edition, which would have cards inserted to ruin the game, because of ludicrously wrong answers.⁶⁴ Although this sarcasm reflected the attitudes of Horn Abbot, it also demonstrated the frustration of an American who found people playing Trivial Pursuit at every turn and thus its rampant popularity. Other complaints came from people who found mistakes in the questions. Amanda Freymann, a senior art director for Houghton Mifflin said, “It’s officially overpriced, so you should at least be able to feel like you’re paying for accuracy.”⁶⁵

Haney and Abbott addressed her complaint by hiring a fact checker for Genus II.⁶⁶ However, this complaint simply indicates that Americans wanted accuracy, not that they disliked the game's facts.

Trivial Pursuit profits peaked in 1984 when they reached \$600 million, half of the total money spent on all board games in 1984, and over three times that of all other adult board games.⁶⁷ The subsequent lull in profits (down to \$90 million in 1985), did not mean that Americans had lost interest in the game or the concept it offered. A significant reason for the decrease in sales was that so many Americans already owned the game. With this respite, other adult board games arrived on the market, such as *Pictionary*®, but more importantly, America continued to live the Trivial Pursuit life. Throughout the 1980s, people played the game in its traditional and in altered forms (Figures 29-31).

Trivial Pursuit contests and tournaments became prominent. In 1984, the Easter Seals Society held contests in eighty cities around the United States, ranging from Bridgeport, Connecticut, to Omaha, Nebraska. The Omaha contest raised \$3000-\$4000 with nineteen 4-person teams competing, including those representing Creighton University, Blue-Cross Blue-Shield, a bookstore, and a doctor's office.⁶⁸ In 1987, the Second Annual Trivial Pursuit Superbowl was held in Osceola, Florida, to support the local Crisis Hotline and other social services, with \$100 team entry fees and \$3 observer fees.⁶⁹ While these contests assisted in benefiting local communities, other trivia contests served purely personal gain.

In May 1984, a tournament held at the Hyatt Regency in Chicago offered a trip to Europe and TV appearances as prizes for the winner. Americans enthusiastically participated in such contests, gaining personal prosperity and momentary fame via their factual knowledge. So important were facts and success at the game, that people began simply memorizing the questions. In San Francisco, KQED radio sponsored a regional trivia contest in 1985, during which people

complained about contestants memorizing answers from Genus II cards in order to win.⁷⁰ Facts became an essential determinant of worth and a means to economic and social success. In 1984, the game show *Jeopardy!* returned to television, after nine years off the air.⁷¹ Its renewed popularity can be attributed to the trivia craze, just as spin-offs and books profited.

Despite the neo-conservative ideal of social cohesion via a single moral agenda, civil rights issues and the AIDS epidemic brought diversity discussions to the forefront. Liberals sought to retain the 1960s and 1970s ideologies, offering the other side to the culture wars. Americans combined diversity with entrepreneurial drive by perceiving Trivial Pursuit as a means for personal success and for giving their own version of essential knowledge. Lay people joined the fight to determine American factual knowledge and shared culture by creating their own trivia games. Jewish, Catholic, African-American, and city versions, reached the market when people noticed that a successful board game could prove lucrative and encourage personal success; and trivia could increase knowledge by helping players remember facts useful for religion, cultural history, job and hobby training, or entertainment purposes. The creators of Tradition, a Jewish trivia game, believed that the more often people played, the more they would know about Jewish traditions, thus educating their children.⁷² Rise 'N Fly was an African-American version, created in 1985 and used as the basis of school quiz contests in 1989, emphasizing key African-American figures and achievements.⁷³ These alternate versions did not find as much voice as the original game, but presented an alternate viewpoint that poked at, but did not significantly change, the American economic and educational culture. All based their game on the concept that trivia helped educate the public, especially youth. David O'Reilly, in 1985, said that these alternate versions were not "to display knowledge but to impart it."⁷⁴ This transition was essential, because it demonstrated the importance of facts in the educational realm.

Schools expanded their Scholastic Bowl or Knowledge Bowl programs, trivia competitions promoted by local school boards. Allentown, Pennsylvania's 'Scholastic Scrimmage' in 1985 offered scholarships to high school teams who could answer English, social studies, science, math, and fine arts questions, developed from educational sources and written for the show's format.⁷⁵ Thus, what began as an adult game reached a younger generation, making them dependent on facts and finding pride in the ability to express these facts in a quick, academic manner.

These games, contests, and books illustrated the American desire for material success, and the means by which this could be determined. Suddenly, it was important to succeed at a game. Trivial Pursuit made the knowledge and recognition of varied facts another measure of American worth and educational health. The tidbits that Haney and Abbott amusedly installed in this game were now facts that everyone had to know. The facts proposed by alternate versions brought into question: what was the essential American canon of knowledge? Was it determined by the masses, or by the policy and game makers? Educators in the culture wars stepped in to answer this question.

Facts in Education

In 1984, an editorial in the Seattle Times asked, "Why not tie our educational system more closely to the trivia craze that is sweeping the country?"⁷⁶ The writer, Dick West, proceeded to give tongue-in-cheek suggestions for how students could use trivia as a definition of education, including having computer trivia games as the basis for evaluation. He ended asking, "Why stress the 'three Rs' (reading, writing, and arithmetic) when school children could be learning the 'four Ps' (piddling, paltry, picayune, and petty)?"⁷⁷ Obviously, this tactic goes against all principles of education, which is not to teach any of the four Ps. West's facetious comments do highlight an educational emphasis on factual knowledge. Educators asked, "What do and don't students know?" and "What should students know?"⁷⁸ Neo-conservatives believed that education should teach

students one set of knowledge and culture, implicitly encouraging Americans to know the same facts.

Although Trivial Pursuit cannot be seen as teaching morality, it did teach one set of knowledge, as did conservative reforms. President Reagan was not personally interested in educational reforms. In 1980, he proposed abolishing the newly formed Department of Education. However, because morality and values could be instilled through education, he was encouraged to maintain the department. In 1981, Reagan appointed William Bennett to the National Endowment of the Humanities. In 1985 Bennett became Secretary of Education. These appointments helped define the course of American educational reforms. Bennett valued western civilization in education and the use of school to inculcate morals and a canon. He believed that

the Western classics—the ‘canon’—constituted a body of superior work that addressed questions of timeless importance. Reading them, in his view, was a critical part of a liberal education as well as a liberating experience for anyone, regardless of sex or personal background.⁷⁹

The western canon would increase intellectual and academic standards as well as tie Americans together. Liberals objected to this curriculum, because it did not represent women or minorities.⁸⁰

Ira Shor, writing in 1992, highlights the Restorationists, his term for neo-conservatives. They argued that secular humanism “opens the door to cultural relativism, which in turn encourages dissent and non-traditional values. Instead of monogamy, heterosexuality, religious faith, patriotism, and obedience, school breeds opposite politics and alternate life-styles.”⁸¹ Shor characterizes 1980s education as nostalgic and viewing the 1960s as history. In the 1980s, the press closely followed education, particularly after the *Nation at Risk* report.⁸² A new social contract developed from above that dictated what happened across the United States.⁸³ Veronica Donahue DiConti argues that the reforms enacted in 1980s education “served the interests of business and political leaders.”⁸⁴

The changes in the education system indicate the strength of these agitators, many of whom did belong to strong political groups.

American educators latched onto the standards promoted by Trivial Pursuit both in policy creation and in independent classrooms. Conservative leaders in education, such as William Bennett, Allan Bloom, Diane Ravitch, and Chester Finn, bemoaned the diversified educational principles that coincided with Civil Rights and multiple intelligences in the 1960s and 1970s. There were now multiple courses offered in the social sciences and language arts, which allowed students to learn a specialized area, what Clair Keller called the balkanization of education.⁸⁵ In the 1960s, colleges and universities started this trend by stressing multiculturalism and diversity in their curriculum. Distaste for the diverse curriculum emerged in the 1980s at the higher and secondary levels. In 1980 Stanford University instated a Western culture requirement, though it had dropped its Western civilization course in 1969.⁸⁶ Troy argues that this event triggered a fight between students and administrators, yet it was not the only instance of curricular changes, nor the most radical change in teaching methodology.

In the early 1980s, standardized tests alerted educators to the fact that a high percentage of American students did not know what the conservative intelligentsia considered core knowledge. Although some, including a majority of classroom teachers, continued to advocate diversity in education, leaders in education voiced their views against this process, because it did not help promote a unified America—or an elite set of knowledge. Chester Finn, Diane Ravitch, Allan Bloom, Lynne Cheney, and E.D. Hirsch belonged to a consortium of educators concerned with a return to fact-based education. In advocating a set canon, these educators hoped to reunite American culture under the control of a dominant culture. The desire for cultural unity in education was part of a larger American trend toward creating one nation. This aim came through in education, as well

as in Trivial Pursuit. However, they faced resistance from liberals such as Henry Giroux

Unifying Principle

In 1969, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a tail-end of President Johnson's Civil Rights Bills, began as a means of promoting equal education in the United States. In the following years, students across the country took the NAEP in reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies and civics, art, and music. The social studies/civics test is most important for our purposes, because it succinctly demonstrates the era's ideologies, and the subsequent addition of an American History test in 1988 acknowledges a shift in the nation's educational goals for unification via factual knowledge.

The 1980/81 social studies/civics assessment included questions related to civil service and civic knowledge, continuing a trend from the Civil Rights Era.⁸⁷ In 1986, Ken Carlson, a pedagogic reviewer, criticized the methodology of the civics test, because it allowed too much bias in scoring. Carlson gave examples of questions where two answers were almost identical, but one was judged incorrect, while the other was correct. He believed that the acceptance and rejection of answers was based on scorers' ideologies.⁸⁸ This assessment evaluated opinions, along with some facts, as evidenced by the sample exercises published in 1983. Questions included: "Are there any times when you believe that people should not be permitted to get together to make plans or to do things? Will you explain your answer?"⁸⁹ and "What advantage is there in [having United States Senators elected in staggering years], rather than having all of the Senators up for reelection at the same time every six years."⁹⁰ These questions did not have one acceptable answer, as demonstrated by the subsequent pages of sample answers. Although the civics/social studies test continued in the 1980s, it did not foster the unity and the steady answers that drove America. Gil Troy argues that Americans in the 1980s wanted simple answers.

Many intellectuals who dismissed Ronald Reagan as dumb failed to appreciate the great affection many Americans had for him precisely because his perceptions matched theirs. Reagan's simple, commonsense nostrums about crime, mortality, and social order validated millions who had been railing against governmental illogic and intellectual blindness for years.⁹¹

These millions belonged, in part, to the New Right. Adoption of an American History test in 1988 offered another realm of testing which contained fewer ambiguous questions and answers and encouraged Americans to learn the same 'non-bias' information. They also advocated a nostalgic look at the United States as idealized by neo-conservatives.

The NAEP implemented its American History test in 1988, because "current national concern with K-12 school reform has focused renewed attention on the teaching of United States history."⁹² This test emphasized the ability to use the facts of history—from chronology of people, events, documents, etc.—coupled with their contexts to heighten reasoning skills. History offered educators a way to evaluate students' understanding of 'the truth,' while not confusing them with politics. The new assessment focused more on distinct facts than the previous civics test did.

This addition to testing policy developed in the wake of fact-seeking educational 'experts,' who alerted Americans to the need to reinforce the solid areas of 'humanities' and 'culture' instead of the equality-seeking social studies curriculum. In a 1982 critique of the NAEP, Ellis Page argued that the original political and ideological goals of the NAEP did not apply to the 1980s, whose goal was excellence, not equality, in education.⁹³ Page further argued that education did not need a unified theory in social studies, but a way to the 'truth.'⁹⁴ Educators assessed this call for higher 'quality' education, which needed to work with parental goals focused on standardized tests and hence, perceived universal knowledge.⁹⁵ Parents' goals for their children's success on standardized tests showed a desire to create national unity in the educational system. In 1986, the NAEP introduced the possibility of offering a state-by-state comparison of assessment results. Until this

point, the organization's goal was to evaluate nationwide trends, with regional, but not state, divisions. This methodology required reformulation of the NAEP so that a comparison of states would be adequate. Educators, asked to propose approaches to instituting this reformulation, argued that the NAEP should "identify and test the widest possible set of objectives that all states [Departments of Education] can agree upon."⁹⁶ Therefore, this centralization indicated what concrete information was most essential for students across the United States. After years of division, all state educators needed to cooperate with the NAEP objectives and demonstrate improvement in the tests if they wished to receive federal funding.

State education departments also assisted this change. One example of how education had to conform to this unification was the growing emphasis on teacher exams. In 1985, the Arkansas Board of Education required all teachers to pass a competency test in the areas of reading, writing, and math. Governor Bill Clinton encouraged the institution of this policy, as a means of "bolstering confidence in teachers."⁹⁷ The testing coincided with Reagan's "emphasis on upgrading the quality of education."⁹⁸ Although many teachers saw this policy as degrading, and though the Arkansas Education Association (AEA) sponsored a protest, the majority of teachers took the tests in order to save their jobs. Peggy Nabors of the AEA said, "The law was not designed to help, but was designed to be punitive in nature and to make teachers the scapegoat for education's ills."⁹⁹ Whether the policy was purely punitive or a way to improve education, it did emphasize that concrete tests were the secret to success and supported the *Nation at Risk* report that neo-conservatives latched onto. Although some teachers and members of the AEA protested this bureaucracy, the state's insistence on creating a unifying principle highlighted a return to canon and the necessity for all Americans (teachers) to have at least a common starting point dictated by a conservative hegemonic standard. The weakened protest indicates the quieting trend in American

society, and the tendency to accept conservative control in pursuit of ‘excellence.’

Several conservative agitators assisted this change in education policy, most importantly Finn, Ravitch, Bloom, and E.D. Hirsch. These scholars vocally bemoaned the stratification of American education, and preferred core knowledge for all students. Finn and Ravitch directly attacked the social studies curriculum in their edited works Against Mediocrity and Challenges to the Humanities, in addition to several joint articles in education journals and newspapers. They promoted an education system that emphasized ‘great ideas’ of the humanities. They cited a decrease in student ability to recognize ‘essential’ information as a sign of the decrepitude of the American education system.¹⁰⁰ These article collections expressed a desire to turn Americans from teaching social studies, to more concrete, elite ideas. The ideas they expressed indicate the 1980s Eurocentrism, as first debated in the 1980 Stanford Western culture requirement.¹⁰¹ Clair Keller, in an essay on improving history curriculum, insisted that history needed to “reinststate an appropriately modified version of the chronological survey approach to teaching history,” because concept-driven curriculum distorted the time and place of history.¹⁰² She also advised that all world history classes

begin with the origins of our Western heritage in the Middle East, then trace its spread through the Mediterranean region into Europe. Study of Asia and Africa would be integrated into the course by taking up the interactions between those cultures and Western cultures as Europeans developed extensive, rather continuous contact with those lands.¹⁰³

This methodology centered American curriculum in one area—the West—and insisted on a certain set of facts as most essential. The suggestion returned education to a nostalgic ideal of America, determined that simple knowledge of these old facts would elevate America’s prosperity, potential, and unity. Also in Against Mediocrity, Harry S. Broudy compared the humanities to elite symbols:

To argue that the humanities are both desirable and necessary is a bit like claiming that a Cadillac is *really* more economical than a Chevrolet or that champagne and caviar are essential to health. It may

be true, but who would believe it? However, strange as it may seem, today the educated mind really is essential and not dispensable.¹⁰⁴

Although not addressing a popular audience, Broudy and, to a degree, Finn and Ravitch sought to promote the elite ideal seen in American consumerism. It was this elitism, in an attempt to unify, that characterized 1980s America, and also brought into question who could belong to the elite.

Allan Bloom is perhaps best known for his attack on contemporary education standards, because they did not help students advance. Hunter argues that “Bloom’s The Closing of the American Mind was popular not because it treated the esoteric philosophy of Socrates, Heidegger, and Nietzsche with great refinement, but because it provided intellectual legitimation for a populist and conservative critique of progressive change in the university.”¹⁰⁵ In order to justify the focus on western civilization and American history in education, Bloom said “Men must love and be loyal to their family and their peoples in order to preserve them. A father must prefer his child to other children, a citizen his country to others.”¹⁰⁶ In having an open curriculum, Bloom argued that students found no direction. The goal of education was direction and the correct trajectory was toward America and the classics. He asked: “When there are no shared goals or vision of the public good, is the social contract any longer possible?”¹⁰⁷ In his view, ethnocentrism was good, because it gave students something to believe in and a common belief.

E.D. Hirsch’s Cultural Literacy did not reject equality, but proposed that equality in education did not come from offering varied courses, but from developing a curriculum that emphasized those ‘facts’ that all Americans should know in order to communicate in the ‘mass’ culture. He proposed the reinstatement of a canon in schools, so that students would have common knowledge, essential to functioning in the United States. This book and the subsequent Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, listed 5000 terms that all Americans should know in order to be considered culturally literate. This appealed to Americans’ vanity, to the trivia craze, and to the united national

ideal. Educators embraced this return to a single victorious American culture, but needed a way in which to articulate it. They, like Trivial Pursuit, determined what information was worth knowing and why it was important.¹⁰⁸

Most educational treatises do not belong in a study of American popular culture because they do not indicate the feelings of a populace. Hunter says of Hirsch: “Cultural Literacy was wildly successful not because of his educational theory but because of his endorsement, cataloguing, and packaging of what were in effect ‘the eternal verities’ of Western civilization.”¹⁰⁹ However, Hirsch’s book was on the New York Times bestseller list for weeks, the paperback for at least seven. Elliot Krieger said that many Americans bought the book for the ‘list.’¹¹⁰ Its writing style, which included frequent repetition of ideas, its brevity (a mere 151 pages of text), and its appeal to a nation obsessed with facts made it a popular buy. The hardback copy cost \$16.95, and sold 200,000 copies in 1987.¹¹¹ Hirsch encouraged American education to better those people left behind, not because of economic troubles but because they lacked information.

Criticizing Conservative Educational Reforms

Some criticized the entire concept of neo-conservatism in education. Henry Giroux belonged to a liberal bloc that disagreed with neo-conservative principles. In 1988, Giroux argued that “The New Right’s appeal lies in its bold invocation of moral strength, its celebration of America’s greatness, and its ability to speak a language of hope and promise, even while it systematically ignores major social problems and promotes dangerous levels of militarism.”¹¹² However, he preferred education based on post-modern deconstruction of thought, not outright diversity.

More popular writers explicitly criticized Hirsch. Gary Galles of the Chicago Tribune wrote in October 1987, “A data dragon of mythical proportions attacks and often vanquishes a child’s love of learning long before we can call him educated.”¹¹³ Galles argued that if Americans continued this

quest for trivial knowledge, kids could be ‘educated’ by watching *Jeopardy!*, rather than going to school. His concept of knowledge lay in understanding the significance of facts. This was a relevant argument, which many educators addressed in emphasizing the need for facts. Ravitch, Finn, and Bloom in encouraging the study of “great works” did not simply ask for trivial knowledge, but for understanding the meaning behind this canon. “Without the values and ethics, the wisdom and knowledge, the insight and context, the shared understanding and communications embedded in the humanities, we risk being a society that loses its balance.”¹¹⁴ Despite Galles’ argument, the point of the educational innovators was to take a factual knowledge and apply it.

Richard and Vivian Doremus wondered how we could ask for “a common pool of knowledge” in such a large, diverse country.¹¹⁵ They also proposed that the essential facts should relate directly to the world in which students would be graduating—Emily Dickinson or information that was essential in the 1930s was irrelevant in the 1980s. Instead of focusing on facts, the Doremus’s believed that “Education should give pupils the ability to find facts when they need them in order to come to reasoned judgments about world, national, state, local and personal issues.”¹¹⁶ They too disagreed with rote memorization, because, according to research, students forget 50-90% of what they learned in 1-5 years.¹¹⁷ However, as Finn emphatically stated, “There is an intimate relationship between facts and concepts. You can’t have concepts without facts. You can’t have skills without knowledge.”¹¹⁸ Senator Joseph Biden, Jr., insisted that critics who thought the facts that policy makers pushed were trivial, were simply being too meticulous: “there’s nothing actually trivial about the huge gaps in students’ background knowledge.”¹¹⁹ The greater issue was—what were the essential facts for all Americans to know in order to succeed? The fact that the Sky King had a niece named Penny, in the 1950s TV series, was surely not essential for all Americans to know and recognize, but who determined what was important?¹²⁰

Most of Hirsch's critics did not argue with the concept that Americans needed a common knowledge. Instead, they objected to what Hirsch and his compatriots considered the essential facts. One critic said: "By making what are essentially political statements, and conservative ones at that, in the form of educational theories, Hirsch runs the risk of alienating readers, like myself, who agree with his educational ideas but disagree with his politics."¹²¹ Hirsch's list, and the subsequent dictionary that explained it, offered 5000 terms that all Americans should understand in order to read and comprehend the average American newspaper. Hirsch was adamant in explaining that this list was not an absolute and that it was a product of its time. Therefore, it is interesting to consider what 'facts' Hirsch thought essential for all American knowledge—so much so that they should all be incorporated in some way into a standard curriculum.

The 'facts' ranged from literary to scientific. Under M, were Macbeth, Mach number, Machiavelli, macho, macrocosm/microcosm, macroeconomics, mad as a hatter, Madagascar, Madison Avenue, the Madonna, and the text to "Mary Had a Little Lamb." As in Trivial Pursuit there were certain biases as to what sort of information was 'important'. The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, which Hirsch published to accompany his 'list,' was divided into 23 categories (see Figure 27). This exhaustive collection's excessive attention to proverbs and idioms sought to control not just the factual information Americans knew, but also how they talked and expressed themselves. By including numerous biblical references and moralizing idioms, Hirsch appealed to the New Right.

Like Trivial Pursuit the game, Hirsch's book had spin-offs. Multi-Cultural Literacy, published by the Graywolf Press, objected to what Hirsch called 'the basics' of cultural literacy and incorporated Nelson Mandela, ska, Anasazi, Bo Diddley, domestic violence, and Mary Wollstonecraft among necessary facts for all Americans to know.¹²² Scott Walter of Graywolf Press

said, “It’s nice that education became such a hot topic—we’re all in favor of education. But it was somewhat disturbing to see the bent in education be turned to such a conservative, white, European, male direction.”¹²³ Many reviewers of Hirsch’s list criticized him for pushing an elitist white culture. Hirsch disputed this, arguing that his terms were

the background information, stored in [Americans’] minds, that enables them to take up a newspaper and read it with an adequate level of comprehension, getting the point, grasping the implications, relating what they read to the unstated context which alone gives meaning to what they read.¹²⁴

Thus, the facts he proposed were useful for more Americans. His goal was to create an equal playing field for all and, unlike Civil Rights era ideology, this equality came from knowing the same information, not from diversity.

Alan Wolfe did not criticize the idea that all students needed to have at least a cursory knowledge of what they were reading in order to comprehend. His criticism attacked Hirsch’s idea that culture was always national, and therefore should incorporate that which was unique to the nation, with less emphasis on the international. Hirsch, Wolfe argued, ignored those who were “marginal” to American society. Wolfe believed that a better version of cultural literacy would include those aspects from minority culture, because

When large segments of the population feel that the dominant culture is not their culture, they are likely to resist learning it. Perception has a way of becoming fact. Minority groups believe that culture is power. Spread the latter more evenly and the former is more likely to be shared. Insist that the culture of some is by definition the culture of all and resistance to cultural literacy is likely to increase.¹²⁵

In the 1980s, the culture should represent not just Euro-Americans, but all groups. Although the protests of the 1960s and 1970s had faded into the background, Americans still espoused some of its ideas. However, instead of allowing these groups to exist in their separate realms, all needed to combine into one mass culture, espousing Reagan’s inaugural vision and neo-conservative rejection

of non-European traditions. This culture depended on knowing a similar set of facts.

Those who objected to Hirsch did not criticize his call for a fact-related education, but argued that his facts were not adequate. The members of Graywolf Press also promoted facts as essential for all American knowledge. One sardonic editorial and Henry Giroux's Schooling and the Struggle for Public Life did oppose fact-based education as related to Trivial Pursuit, however these arguments were rare. Most critics simply accepted the need to evaluate student success based on their ability to recognize facts.

The U.S. Department of Education, under William Bennett and Chester Finn, supported Hirsch's concepts.¹²⁶ The leading forces behind encouraging a canon of facts came from the role of leadership. In addition, according to Jerry Ward, professor at Tougaloo College, "There's a whole ideology behind [Mr. Hirsch's] definition of culture—white, Anglo-Saxon, and, above all, arrogant."¹²⁷ Yet there is also an obvious tendency toward white, Anglo-Saxon—or Western—culture in Trivial Pursuit. And more important for the resurgence of a unified American culture, Hirsch's book influenced some curriculum development. "Scholars drafting California's new history guidelines, which emphasize historical narratives and higher order conceptual thinking, report that they find themselves under pressure from state education officials to 'mention' everything on Mr. Hirsch's list."¹²⁸ Though there were objections to these facts, and though people did develop their own 'lists' or games of essential facts, the concept of factual knowledge prevailed and sought to create one American knowledge. By focusing on the west, they cooperated with the New Right's platform.

The Fact Game in the Classroom

An emphasis on canon and 'facts' from the culture wars would not matter if there were no reflection in the classroom. Some classroom teachers merged the principles of Trivial Pursuit and

the canon in order to engage their students. Whether playing the original game in the classroom or creating alternate versions, teachers used the game principle to push students to learn facts, conforming to 1980s ideas of educational excellence. This did not apply to just the humanities, as was the focus of Finn, Ravitch, and Bloom but to all subjects. Teachers adjusted the formula of Trivial Pursuit by trying to deemphasize the truly trivial questions, and asking only questions that would help students to achieve and remember core information.

In March 1985, the Carleton College Chemistry Department reviewed a CD-Rom game for classroom teachers. *TrivGame* used the Trivial Pursuit question and answer format, but

In contrast to the truly trivial questions that are included in the common board games, the object in an educational setting is to create files of questions that have a measure of significance. For example, it is not educational to ask for the birthplace of Linus Pauling, but a good question would be to ask the name of the American who won the Nobel Prizes for both Chemistry and Peace.¹²⁹

Therefore, unlike the original game, which does ask such trivial questions, Trivial Pursuit in the classroom excluded the insignificant questions, following the advice of educational critics. Unlike Trivial Pursuit questions that asked about Nixon's family and favorite sport, questions in the classroom would ask about his political actions. *TrivGame* was also a useful classroom tool because it allowed teachers and students to create questions that were significant to the subject they studied. Thus, a higher bureaucracy did not create the information. Individual teachers, concerned with what they deemed important for their students, performed this task. Still, it was the regurgitation of facts that drove success, not an implicit understanding of significance.

In 1989, Pat Dunn created Math Trivial Pursuit for Intermediate and Junior High School Levels. The purpose of the game was "to have fun and enjoy mathematics while learning and reinforcing mathematics in the following categories: Mathematical Concepts and Applications; Mathematical Computations; Geometry; Mathematics for Daily Living."¹³⁰ The activity book

contained a game board, and cards to cut out and use for play. Dunn was an elementary administrator and teacher, who worked at Kino Learning Center in Tucson, AZ, a school that espoused alternative principles of education. This background is important in understanding the breadth of fact-based/Trivial Pursuit-related education. As an alternative school, Kino “not only emphasize[d] the conventional skills of reading, writing and computing, but [went] beyond these basics to the futurist skills of choosing, relating, valuing, creating and learning how to learn.”¹³¹ While working in an alternative base, the school also subscribed to the facts offered by a Trivial Pursuit nation and the neo-conservative movement, and used these facts to determine success in education.

Rochelle Stein, a middle school science teacher in Sunrise, Florida, used the Trivial Pursuit concept in her classroom. Under the assumption that students learn from playing games, she also presumed that students could learn by making games. Therefore, her gifted-and-talented class made board games based on their science lessons. The students used Trivial Pursuit, Monopoly, Dungeons and Dragons®, and other games as models for “Journey through Endoplasmic Reticulum,” “Chrysalis Catastrophe,” and “Attack of the Killer Protozoa.”¹³² Because players had to study science in order to answer questions from the game, they encouraged the acquisition and retention of facts. Other teachers used Trivial Pursuit in foreign language classes to teach history, culture, and language, or in social studies classes to teach world facts and research skills through game creation.¹³³ These games did not emphasize simply finding facts, but also recognizing their significance.

Along with this emphasis on facts in general came heightened attention to geography. Educators complained that many American students did not know geography. The Colorado University system made the adequate completion of a geography test a prerequisite for admission in

1988.¹³⁴ Paul Anderson of the Illinois State University Department of Geography created his own list of essential geographical knowledge necessary for students and adults. The goal was not simply to know the place names, but also to apply these names when having discussions in and out of classrooms.¹³⁵ Trivial Pursuit made more recognition of place names essential, though certainly not to the degree that Anderson proposed. With neo-conservative reforms, fact recognition became a unifying facet of education

The ‘debalkanization’ of American education came through a fact surge for which Trivial Pursuit set an example. American educators rejected 1960s and 1970s ideals in the Reagan-era economic and political atmosphere. They latched onto a popular phenomenon, whose success was also driven by the preceding era and neo-conservatism. If Trivial Pursuit had not been successful, neo-conservatives would have still emphasized unifying moral ideals, but the game made it easier to unite education, because Americans already understood and appreciated fact recognition.

United Through Facts?

A 1986 lesson plan proposal said: “If one is good at Trivial Pursuit one is considered to be ‘smart,’ especially among young people. The game is so successful because it simultaneously caters to two important cultural needs in all of us: the quest for knowledge and the urge to play.”¹³⁶ Trivial Pursuit and the education debate formed by the culture wars continued into the 1990s. Within the 1980s, each played a role in trying to unite Americans behind one set of knowledge. Education reform did this consciously; Trivial Pursuit did not. Those who ascribed to the New Right’s educational philosophy knowingly agreed to a set of principles. Those who played Trivial Pursuit did so because it was fun, and in playing they came to know the same information. Both advocated western culture as the most important form of knowledge. However, this does not mean that all Trivial Pursuit players believed in neo-conservatism. In purchasing the game, they essentially

agreed to its meaning of knowledge in some way, but could play for purely entertainment purposes.

Although Trivial Pursuit and educational policies worked to unite those Americans who could afford to buy into neo-conservative ideals, Americans still divided on issues such as race, sexuality, and class. Reagan's government wished to show America as united, as did Trivial Pursuit. However, the culture wars emphasized continued differences of opinion. These divisions show that Reagan and Trivial Pursuit did not fully succeed in their goals, yet the alternate voices, such as spin-off games and liberal educators, lost in the face of greater economic and political successes. Specific conservative policies in economics and education sought unity and consensus; in re-electing Ronald Reagan to office in 1984, Americans accepted this vision.¹³⁷ The Haneys and Abbott created a game to entertain via a certain set of information. In buying the game and participating in its connected spin-offs, Americans supported the desire for facts. Educational leaders combined these two ideals to create a curricular change, initiated by popular support. Wanting to feel good in everyday life, praised for their economic well-being and jobs, Americans did not want to be criticized for ignoring issues. By embracing an educational system and an entertainment system that praised you for knowing facts rather than evaluating issues, Americans created a 1980s message for equality in educational excellence. The educated elite, largely influenced by the New Right, determined what facts Americans needed to know and used the information factories of schools and games to instill these facts. The popularity of Trivial Pursuit made this change easier, as Americans were already learning to regurgitate facts in their leisure time.

Figure 29. Official Editions of Trivial Pursuit in the 1980s.

Title	Year	Topic
Genus I	1981	General
Baby Boomer	1983	“Atomic Power to Flower Power”
All-Star Sports	1984	Sports
Silver Screen	1984	Movies
Young Player’s	1985	Children
RPM	1985	Music
Genus II	1986	General
Disney	1986	Disney
80s	1989	1980s General

Figure 30. Selected Trivia Games of the 1980s. Following Trivial Pursuit’s success, Americans created their own trivia games that reflected their interests. None of these games gained much prominence, though some received brief media attention.

Title	Year	Topic
BASSmaster Fishing Trivia Game	1985	Fishing
Tradition	1985	Jewish Religion & Culture
Seattle Trivia	1985	Seattle
Beantown	1985	Boston
Big Apple	1985	New York
The Great San Francisco Trivia Game	1985	San Francisco
Sexcetera	1985	Sex
The Illustrated Sexual Trivia	1985	Sex
Hawkeye Trivia	1985	University of Iowa
Fighting Irish	1985	Notre Dame
There’s Balls	1985	Sports
Bible Trivia	1985	Bible
Rise ‘n Fly	1985	African American History
Texas Trivia	1985	Texas
Dr. Ruth’s Game of Good Sex	1986	Sex
Travel America	1986	United States
Technicality	1986	Law
Is the Pope Catholic?	1986	Catholicism
Police Pursuit	1989	Police/Law

Figure 31. New Adult Games of the 1980s. Trivial Pursuit’s profitability encouraged other Americans to create board games specifically for an adult audience.

Title	Year
A Question of Scruples	1986
Pictionary	1986
Out of Context	1986
Ubi	1986
Psychologizer	1986
Incognito	1986
Baffles	1986
Condomoneyum	1986
Your Money	1986
Mid-Life Crisis	1986

Charades	1986
How to Host a Murder	1986
Executive Venture	1987

¹Eric Etheridge, "Just the facts, please / America's information junkies just can't get enough" in San Francisco Chronicle, Aug 23, 1987, p. 13/Z1.

²Ronald Reagan, "Inaugural Address, West Front of the U.S. Capitol, January 20, 1981," in Speaking My Mind, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), pp. 61-2.

³Philip E. Orbanes, The Game Makers: The Story of Parker Brothers from Tiddledy Winks to Trivial Pursuit, (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2004), p. ix.

⁴Likewise, David Parlett's Oxford History of Board Games makes no pivotal cultural claims about board games. Although describing the history of individual board games, their method of play, and their categorization in relation to other games, he does not analyze their social implications. He argues: "True games serve no conscious practical purpose beyond that of satisfying an urge to play which is sometimes regarded as an instinct." Like Orbanes, Parlett does not consider board games as a reflection of cultural goals. David Parlett, The Oxford History of Board Games, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 2.

⁵David Wallace Adams and Victor Edmonds, "Making Your Move: The Educational Significance of the American Board Game, 1832-1904," History of Education Quarterly v. 17, #4 (Winter 1977), p. 360.

⁶Ibid. They highlight a shift from 19th century rural, religious values to 20th century urban secular values illustrated in board games.

⁷See Elizabeth Cohen, A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America. (New York: Vintage Books, 2003).

⁸Michael Rogin, Ronald Reagan, the Movie, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

⁹Gil Troy, Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

¹⁰Rogin.

¹¹William C. Berman, America's Right Turn: From Nixon to Clinton, 2nd ed, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1998), p. 50.

¹²Ibid., p. 110.

¹³John Ehrman, The Eighties: America in the Age of Reagan, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 172.

¹⁴James Davison Hunter, Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America, (USA: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), p. 59.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 144.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 148.

¹⁷John Karaagac, Between Promise and Policy: Ronald Reagan and Conservative Reformism, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000), p. 248. William Rehnquist was appointed to the Supreme Court by President Richard Nixon in 1972. Reagan promoted him to chief justice in 1986, at the same time that Scalia was appointed associate justice. He also appointed Sandra Day O'Connor, whose moderate stance did not agree with the Religious Right, hence the inability to reverse *Roe v. Wade*.

¹⁸Hunter, p. 62.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 136.

²⁰T.J. Jackson Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities," American Historical Review v. 90, #3 (Jan 1985), p. 571.

²¹In 1957, the Soviet launch of Sputnik inspired American educators to reevaluate the educational system and change the method of teaching to promote science and math. In the 1980s, Trivial Pursuit came with a resurgence in and reevaluation of humanities education. A 1983 report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education called the United States *A Nation at Risk*, claiming that the education system was mediocre and required refurbishing.

²²Entertainment and Sports & Leisure questions are exclusively focused on the United States, and science questions often are not related to a specific world region, and are therefore negligible for comparison.

²³ Because this paper addresses both the creation of Trivial Pursuit and its reception by Americans, it uses numerous newspaper and magazine articles from the 1980s. These come from across the United States, including, but not limited to, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Boston Globe, Houston Chronicle, Minneapolis Star Tribune, Allentown Morning Call, Omaha World-Herald, Chicago Tribune, San Francisco Chronicle, and Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel, as well as national publications: USA Today, Time, Business Week, and Newsweek, thus incorporating a wide geography and demographic. These articles include contemporary interviews with the creators, the production company, consumers, and retailers, as well as business statistics. News articles and pedagogical treatises also stress the increased presence of ‘facts’ in education as opposed to process.

²⁴ Cohen, p. 397.

²⁵ Troy, p. 67.

²⁶ Berman, p. 101.

²⁷ Troy, p. 56

²⁸ Ehrman, p. 214.

²⁹ Troy, p. 67

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 70. Instead of having a surplus in 1984, the national deficit had actually reached \$185.3 billion.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 120. A byproduct of individual economic prosperity under Reaganomics was a widening gap, leaving the poorer classes behind with decreased spending on social programs that existed for their benefit.

³² Louise Bernike, “Trivia Inc,” Esquire v. 103, no. 3 (March 1985), p. 118. They had previously attempted a chain-letter scheme which saw some profits.

³³ *Ibid.* In another example of the inherent jocular spirit of the game, the creators ended the game’s ‘Notes on Play’ saying, “Whatever decisions may be made on less weighty matters, it is highly recommended that players keep the plastic trees on which the tokens and scoring wedges come. They make excellent swizzle stick.” Trivial Pursuit: Master Game~Genus Edition, USA: Selchow & Righter, 1981.

³⁴ Ron Alexander, “What’s the Name of the New Game? Trivial Pursuit,” New York Times, (Jan 15, 1984), p. A.45.

³⁵ Bernike, p. 120.

³⁶ Alan Saperstein, How Old Was Lolita?, (New York: Random House, 1987), p. 7.

³⁷ Several news articles from the 1980s discuss Mensa, the society for people with high IQs. These say that ‘geniuses’ have no trouble with Trivial Pursuit, therefore further suggesting anyone who succeeds at Trivial Pursuit might have a high IQ and belong to the select elite. See: Jeffrey Crane, “The 2 percent club If you’ve never heard of Mensa, don’t worry. You probably couldn’t get in anyway,” Chicago Tribune, (Jan 4, 1989), p. 10; and Gerard M. Shields, “High-Intellect Group Meets in Allentown,” Allentown (PA) Morning Call, (May 26, 1987), p. B6.

³⁸ Bernike, p. 122.

³⁹ Troy, p. 71. Also see Reagan, pp. 61-2.

⁴⁰ Atari and Apple II video games were popular and became accessible in the early 1980s. Care Bears also grew in the toy and cartoon empire beginning in 1983.

⁴¹ Horn Abbot took a \$44,000 loss on the trial run, selling each game for \$16 wholesale when it cost \$60 to make the game. Bernike, p. 120.

⁴² Philip H. Dougherty, “Advertising; Trivial Pursuit Campaign,” New York Times, (Jul 17, 1984), p. D19. See Figure 28 for one example of an advertisement found in Psychology Today (November 1984), pp. 56-7.

⁴³ Bernike, p. 118.

⁴⁴ Richard Corliss, Time v. 130, no 122 (Nov 30, 1987). p. 70.

⁴⁵ Bernike, p. 122. Censored questions included one about Nancy Reagan being pregnant when she married Ronald Reagan, and the last line of Woody Allen’s movie The Front—“Go fuck yourselves.”

⁴⁶ In New York Times, (December 30, 1986), “Company News; Seeking Board Game Bonanza.”

US Board Game Profits in Millions of Dollars	1983	1984	1985	1986
All board games	\$668	\$1356	\$835	n/a
Trivial Pursuit	n/a	\$600	\$90	\$50 (est)
Other Adult board games	\$185	\$177	\$214	n/a

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Jeffrey Zaslow, “Dentist Pursues Trivia Prize, Carries Day” in Wall Street Journal (May 9, 1984), p. 1.

⁴⁹ Saperstein, p. 8.

⁵⁰ My analysis of the knowledge-base needed in Trivial Pursuit is based on an survey of 1800 questions on 300 cards: the people, places, things, events, and phrases they address, always including (when relevant) the years in which a

person or event took place (including the publication year of books), the venue in which it appeared (politics, movies, books, death), and the country and continent of the occurrence. The analysis required my understanding of the question or the ability to find the meaning of the question (for example, I did not know what venue, year or place the references to “The Sky King” had, and used outside resources to determine that it was a television show from the 1950s). A deeper analysis of percentages is not possible, because I looked at 30% of the questions. This analysis shows the trends observable to a non-casual observer.

⁵¹ Ira Shor, Culture Wars: School and Society in the Conservative Restoration, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 107.

⁵² Ehrman, pp. 185-6.

⁵³ Clair Keller, “Improving High School History Teaching,” in Against Mediocrity: The Humanities in America’s High Schools, ed. Chester E. Finn, Jr., Diane Ravitch, & Robert T. Fancher, (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1984), p. 87.

⁵⁴ Because Trivial Pursuit catered greatly to popular culture, the questions also showed trends in ‘venue’ discussion (Figures 20-26). There were a number of references to specific sports and leisure activities, as well as television shows, movies, books and magazines. Baseball is by far the highest represented team sport with 46 references, followed by football (31 references)—which was surprising from a game created by Canadians, especially since John Haney was a former hockey player. Questions about alcohol were almost as prominent as football questions (30). Although only the Bible stood out in literary sources for its persistent reference, the repeated references to certain sources, such as Gunsmoke and Robinson Crusoe indicated their importance for name recognition.

⁵⁵ Alexander.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* These prices are based on New York City store sales, however other articles indicate similar prices across the U.S.

⁵⁷ Business Week (April 23, 1984), “The Stunning Success of Trivial Pursuit,” p. 51.

⁵⁸ Troy, p. 107.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 148-9.

⁶⁰ New York Times (Nov 11, 1984), “An ‘Obsession’ That is Not Trivial,” p. A3.

⁶¹ Alexander.

⁶² Boston Globe (Feb 28, 1984), “Demand Shows Game to be Trivial in Name Only,” p. 1.

⁶³ Dave Barry, “Let’s rupture trivia addicts’ brain cells,” Providence Journal (Oct 30, 1984), p. B13.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* Some of the questions he proposed include “Was Lassie ever spayed? Yes just after the episode where she ran off with Bart, the Weimaraner, and left little Jeff trapped in the threshing machine; [and] What did Broderick Crawford always remind you of on the television show Highway Patrol.”

⁶⁵ Terri Minsky, “In This Corner; Vigilant Players Pursue Truth in Trivia,” in Boston Globe (Apr 13, 1984), p. 1. One card asks what British city Hitler studied art in, answered Liverpool. Trivial Pursuit: Master Game-Genus Edition®, card 162.

⁶⁶ Corliss.

⁶⁷ See note 46. New York Times, (December 30, 1986), “Company News; Seeking Board Game Bonanza.”

⁶⁸ Omaha World-Herald (May 21, 1987), “Trivia for Charity Raises Thousands,” p. 1.

⁶⁹ Orlando Sentinel (May 21, 1987), “Trivia Fund-Raiser to Help Programs,” p. 5.

⁷⁰ Jon Carroll, “In Pursuit Of Trivia,” San Francisco Chronicle (May 22, 1985), p. 53. Others had more unique forms of playing the game. In Portsmouth Massachusetts, the College and University Scuba Club sponsored a 24 hour Trivial Pursuit marathon—under sixteen feet of water. (Viji Sundaram, “SMU students play not so trivial a game in raising money for terminally ill children,” Providence Journal, (Apr 22, 1985), p. D3.) At the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth, Minnesota, student Kevin Olson organized a human-size game, in hopes of entering the Guinness Book of World Records. The board was 100 feet in diameter and had players walking around the board. (Houston Chronicle (May 8, 1985), “College students play pawns in big trivia game,” p. 21.) In 1985, an HMS Queen Elizabeth II Caribbean cruise introduced Genus II with tickets costing \$1445. (William A Davis, “More Americans are Discovering the Joys of Cruising,” Boston Globe, (Sep 9, 1984), p. 1.)

⁷¹ Janice Cascino, Danielle Yodice, & Richard Wojcieszki, “Kidsday Talking with Alex Trebek,” Long Island Newsday, (Jul 12, 1987), p. 2. Other people profited from the fact craze by publishing trivia books. The book Trivial Conquest was written for Trivial Pursuit players to have as a reference. (Rosemary Jones, “Trivia Buffs Finding New Brain Teasers on Market,” Allentown (PA) Morning Call (Aug 26, 1984), p. E1.) People ‘studying’ for their next game read through this fact book and others like it, as well as memorizing the cards, and looking through encyclopedias.

⁷² Shari Roan, “A Jewish Version of Trivial Pursuit,” Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel (Jun 18, 1985), p. 1D.

⁷³ Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel (Dec 10, 1989), “McArthur High Team Excels in Black History, Culture Contest,” p. 3.

⁷⁴ David O'Reilly, "The Pursuit of Trivia Treasures Copycats Reaping Rewards of Games on Everything from the Bible to Sex," Orlando Sentinel, (Apr 11, 1985), p. E.1.

⁷⁵ Alice Lesoravage, "Stroudsburg High Wins Academic Trivial Pursuit," Allentown (PA) Morning Call (May 3, 1985), p. B6. In 1986, the Illinois High School Association introduced the Scholastic Bowl. It offered a game atmosphere for displaying academic abilities. (Jeff Vorva, "IHSA beats drums for Scholastic Bowl," Chicago Sun-Times (Dec 28, 1986), p. 92.) In Los Angeles, students on Marshall High School's Academic Decathlon team learned innumerable facts and earned forty medals at the 1986 tournament, instilling them with personal pride and a feeling of success as members of the wide American culture. (Larry Gordon, "High School's Brainy Team Finds Sacrifices Produce Big Rewards," Los Angeles Times (Dec 11, 1986), p. 12.)

⁷⁶ Dick West, "In (Trivialized) Pursuit of Better Education," Seattle Times (Oct 10, 1984), p. A12.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ In 1983, as a result of the National Commission on Excellence in Education's report that American education had become mediocre, Reagan called for a reordering of standards. See Shor, pp. 105-6.

⁷⁹ Ehrman, p. 198.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 199.

⁸¹ Shor, pp. 22-3

⁸² Ibid., p. 108.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 163.

⁸⁴ Veronica Donahue DiConti, Interest Groups and Education Reform: The Latest Crusade to Restructure the Schools, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc, 1996), p. 11.

⁸⁵ Keller, in Against Mediocrity, p. 81.

⁸⁶ Troy, p. 269.

⁸⁷ "Citizenship and Social Studies Objectives: 1981-82 Assessment," (Denver: Education Commission of the States, National Assessment of Education Progress, 1980). The civics assessment's objectives, as outlined by NAEP, were to demonstrate skills necessary to acquire information; demonstrate skills necessary to use information; demonstrate understanding and interest in ways human beings organize, adapt to, and develop their environment; and demonstrate understanding and interest in the development of the United States.

⁸⁸ Ken Carlson, "The National Assessment of Educational Progress in Social Studies," (New Jersey: Study Group on the National Assessment of Student Achievement, 1986).

⁸⁹ "Citizenship and Social Studies Released Exercises from the 1981-82 Assessment," (Denver: Education Commission of the States, National Assessment of Education Progress, 1983), p. 103

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 138.

⁹¹ Troy, p. 183.

⁹² "United States History Objectives, 1988 Assessment," (Princeton: National Assessment of Education Progress, 1987), p. 6.

⁹³ Ellis Batten Page, "Rethinking the Principles of National Assessment: Towards a More Useful and Higher Quality Knowledge Base for Education," (North Carolina/Washington D.C.: National Institute of Education, 1982), p. 6.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 8.

⁹⁵ "Standards and National Assessment: Synthesis of Seven Educators' Responses to Questions on the National Assessment's Role Relative to Higher Standards in Education," (Denver: Education Commission of the States, National Assessment of Education Progress, 1982), p. 6.

⁹⁶ Steven F. Ferrara and Stephen J. Thornton, "Using NAEP for State-by-State Comparisons: The Beginnings of a "National Achievement Test" and "National Curriculum": Guidelines and Likely Responses to Aid Instruction and Achievement," (Maryland: Group on the National Assessment of Student Achievement, 1986), p. 7.

⁹⁷ Storer Rowley, "Teachers Forego Boycott, Take Competency Test in Arkansas," Chicago Tribune, (Mar 24, 1985), p. 3.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Chester E. Finn, Jr & Diane Ravitch, "No Trivial Pursuit." Phi Delta Kappan v 69 #8 (April 1988).

¹⁰¹ Troy, p. 269.

¹⁰² Keller in Against Mediocrity, p. 84.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 87.

¹⁰⁴ Harry S. Broudy, "The Uses of Humanistic Schooling," in Against Mediocrity, p. 16.

¹⁰⁵ Hunter, p. 220.

¹⁰⁶ Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), p. 37.

¹⁰⁷ Bloom, p. 27.

¹⁰⁸ See: Chester E. Finn, Jr., Diane Ravitch, & Robert T. Fancher, eds, Against Mediocrity: The Humanities in America's High Schools; Chester E. Finn, Jr., Diane Ravitch, & P. Holley Roberts, eds, Challenges to the Humanities, (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985); and Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind.

¹⁰⁹ Hunter, p. 220.

¹¹⁰ Elliot Krieger, "Reading 'Cultural Literacy': When rote makes right," Providence Journal (Aug 2, 1987), p. H15.

¹¹¹ Edwin McDowell, "The Media Business: Houghton Plans Sequel to 'Cultural Literacy,'" New York Times (July 5, 1988), p. D8.

¹¹² Henry A. Giroux, Schooling and the Struggle for Public Life: Critical Pedagogy in the Modern Age, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 4-5.

¹¹³ Gary M. Galles, "Schools Already Teach Too Much," Chicago Tribune (Oct 26, 1987), p. 15.

¹¹⁴ Against Mediocrity, p. 6.

¹¹⁵ Richard R. Doremus & Vivian P. Doremus, "So What If Pupils Don't Know the Greek Gods? Stacks of facts alone won't prepare students for the 21st Century. They need to master problem-solving skills," Long Island Newsday (Oct 7, 1987), p. 81.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Richmond Dispatch-Times (Sep 26, 1987), "Not-So-Trivial Pursuit," p. A14.

¹¹⁹ Richmond Dispatch-Times (Sep 26, 1987), "Not-So-Trivial Pursuit," p. A14.

¹²⁰ Trivial Pursuit, card 136.

¹²¹ Alan Wolfe, "A new turn in education // 'Cultural Literacy' is an important document whose analysis falters Series: Books," St. Petersburg (FL) Times (May 10, 1987), p. 7D.

¹²² New York Times (Dec 4, 1988), "Christmas books; What's Inanna? Modem? Ska? A Quiz for the Winter Solstice," p. A12.

¹²³ Nancy Stetson, "Opening the mind? Critics of Hirsch and Bloom urge 'multi-cultural literacy,'" in Chicago Tribune, (September 15, 1989), p. 3. The Reagan era in general ignored non-white needs. In 1983, Jesse Jackson criticized budget cuts because they hurt African-American economic need (Troy, p. 91). Reagan persisted in his cuts, just as in education Hirsch et al ignored the cultural needs of African Americans in a desire to create one system.

¹²⁴ E.D. Hirsch, Jr., Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987), p. 2.

¹²⁵ Wolfe.

¹²⁶ Gary Putka, "What Do Khomeini And Dog in a Manger Have in Common? --- They Appear on Disputed List Of What Every American Should Definitely Know," Wall Street Journal (Sept 15, 1987), p. 1.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Edward B. Fiske, "Lessons," New York Times (Nov 9, 1988), p. B10.

¹²⁹ R. W. Ramette, "A Game Approach to Teaching Facts," Computers in Chemical Education Newsletter v. 8, no. 1 (Mar 1985), p. 5.

¹³⁰ Pat Dunn, Math Trivial Pursuit, Junior High Level. A Good Apple Math Activity Book for Grades 7-9, (Carthage IL: Good Apple Inc, 1989), p. iii.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. ii.

¹³² Ricci Graham, "Games Students Make Test Their Teacher: Kids' Projects Real Puzzlers," Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel (Mar 10, 1987).

¹³³ In 1985, Norman Yoshida presented a lesson plan for teaching world facts through a Trivial Pursuit-type game. In this proposal, specifically for an ESL class, students would research and thereby add to their world knowledge, at the same time creating a Trivial Pursuit game. They researched in eleven categories, including: countries of the world, geography/climate, historical events, occupation, words (etymology), military science/code names, inventions, Western Civilization (art, history, education), famous people, and superstitions, myths & symbols. The lesson plan did not simply call for finding facts, but asked students to recognize what facts were important, what kind of questions to ask, and how to relate these facts to their own culture, thereby fostering personal understanding. Thus, like the game, the knowledge of facts was essential; however, espousing educational concepts, these facts were couched in relevance. (Norman Yoshida, "In Pursuit of Trivia -- Game Theory and Research Skills," (1985).) Likewise, Alice Henderson, a Joliet, Illinois, French teacher, used Trivial Pursuit in her classroom to teach students about the French Revolution. Henderson, a valued teacher at Joliet High School, believed that facts were important, but again, coupled with context. (Jim Sulski, "French teacher helps language come alive," Chicago Tribune (Aug 23, 1989), p. 5.) In 1986, Monika Lynch proposed that students in advanced foreign language classes could use the German, French, Italian, and Spanish

versions of the game. It reinforced students' language knowledge and introduced them to more cultural concepts, because it acted as an 'authentic' cultural object. She also suggested that teachers create a version for elementary and intermediate language students, to reinforce the words and concepts they are learning in six categories. She also suggested that teachers create a version for elementary and intermediate language students, to reinforce the words and concepts they are learning in six categories. Suggested categories were: Geography; Food, Drink, Holidays; History and Politics; Art and Literature; Science and Nature; Vocabulary and Miscellaneous. (Monika Lynch, "Trivial Pursuit in the Foreign Language Classroom," (1986), p. 153.)

¹³⁴ Ted Delaney, "Geography's importance has been misplaced; some say subject is moving in wrong direction / National Geographic study illustrates deficiency in U.S.," Colorado Springs Gazette-Telegraph (Nov 18, 1988), p. B1. Although they could not enforce this policy at first (only 15% of freshman passed the test), they did create a geography course to bridge the knowledge gap.

¹³⁵ Paul S. Anderson, "Seeking a Core of World Regional Geography Place Names: An Analysis of Published Materials," (1989), p. 1.

¹³⁶ Lynch, p. 153.

¹³⁷ Berman, p. 119. Unlike in 1980, when turnout was low and voters simply wanted something different, by 1984 Reagan had proved to many that conservatism worked. According to Berman "Ronald Reagan won a landslide victory in 1984 because millions of votes believed, along with him, that it was 'morning again in America.' That widespread belief, nurtured by a major economic upturn, helped Republicans to retain the White House."

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